1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Much of the soil has been greatly im-
134 poverished both by use and by the action of the weather. The most productive soil areas consist of alluvial deposits, but the precipitate nature of much of the region precludes the formation of such deposits. The bulk of the soil is rather poor, but still it is of better quality, on the whole, than in adjoining regions to the north, east, and south.[1]

133 In common with several of the African plateaux the Benguela Highland rises very precipitately from the sea. This is one of the most striking features of African geography. The steepness of the
[48] ascent forces the Benguela Railway to use a cog-line for a short distance. The village of Ngendo, described in the section dealing with the social structure, has an elevation of about 1,650 metres (5,400 feet) but is situated at only about 60 miles from the ocean.[2] That part of the intermediate zone which adjoins the Highland on the west consists of river valleys between mountain ridges and is well watered, but between that and the sea the country is very arid. This arid region is in reality a northern extension of the Kalahari, Omaheke, and Namieb deserts. Much of this arid stretch is exceedingly rough mountainous country. All along the African coast there is a coastal plain, but in the region under consideration it is very narrow. Plain and mountain are equally arid and this desert country generally has an elevation of less than 1,000 metres (about 3,280 feet). This intermediate zone is well known to the Ovimbundu and played an important role in the history of their commercial developments since they were obliged to cross it to reach the European stations on the coast.

101 Other adjoining regions have also been of importance to the Ovimbundu. It was from the region to the north between the Highland and the Kuanza River that some of the principal ruling families came. Across this same region the Ovimbundu had their
[177] first European contacts—with the Portuguese establishments on the Kuanza River. In the regions to the south live cattle-raising people whence the Ovimbundu got cattle, whether by raiding or
133 by trading. East of the Kuanza River valley the elevation drops
167 gradually toward the basins of the Congo and the Zambezi. When the slave- and rubber-trades led the Ovimbundu into this region

[1] i.e. of all adjoining regions only on the north-west are there valleys of superior soil. No complete survey of the soils of Angola has been made. Most books overrate the qualities of the soils of the colony.

[2] See *infra*, Chap. II.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13
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institutions or divisions have had little consideration in drawing administrative boundaries.

Systems of communications have been developed during the last forty years. The Benguela Railway, built by Sir Robert Williams and the Tanganyika Concessions, Ltd., was completed in 1931 from Lobito to Elisabethville in the Katanga region, where direct connexion is made with the South, Central, and East African systems of rail and water transport. This railway serves as the most direct outlet for the mines of the Congo and Northern Rhodesia. The great majority of native employees of the railway are Ovimbundu and it has also brought this people their first contact with the mines and with industrialized South Africa. Regular steamship connexion between Lobito and Europe includes Portuguese, Belgian, German, and British lines with occasional calls from American, Japanese, and Scandinavian ships.[1] Recent years have seen considerable extensions of telegraphic and radio service throughout the colony. Motor roads have been built extensively, especially on the plateau and along the watersheds. In addition there are many wagon-tracks for ox-wagons which were introduced by the voortrekkers almost seventy years ago. In many cases the routes followed are those first used by native caravans.

There are eleven missionary societies at work among the Ovimbundu: five Protestant and six Roman Catholic.[2] There is only one fully organized Umbundu Church. It includes the work of three Protestant societies. It is the work of this Church and of the Missions of the A.B.C.F.M.[3] and of the United Church of Canada with which the evaluations of this study are concerned. The Mission of the A.B.C.F.M. was founded in 1880, as the first Christian work undertaken among the Ovimbundu.[4]

[1] This was the situation in 1939. During the period of the war the Portuguese services were maintained, although with less regularity than before. The U.S. Maritime Commission maintained a cargo service. There were occasional calls by cargo vessels of various nationalities. The Belgian line is reopening its service (1946) and the Portuguese lines have acquired additional vessels.

[2] Pères du Saint-Esprit began work among the Ovimbundu in 1890; the Padres Seculares have been working in the towns; the Benedictines and several orders of nuns also have stations.

[3] American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

[4] The two missions mentioned conduct their work in most respects as a single mission. The other Protestant societies do not have very extensive work among the Ovimbundu.

known throughout the territory bounded by the Congo river, the Great Lakes, and the Kalahàri desert. Most other Ovimbundu kingdoms fell into line with the trading activities of Bailundu and Viye. By the middle of the century this had resulted in a loose system of alliances and mutual understandings to the effect that the traders and caravans of each kingdom would be permitted to enter or travel through the others. At time these "trade-agreements" seem to have embraced all the Umbundu-speaking peoples, but violations were frequent, especially between Viye and the Ciyaka-Cingola-Citata group. Trade-agreements were also made beyond the Umbundu-speaking area, e.g. with the Mwata Yamvo of the Lunda.(1)

From roughly the turn of the twentieth century the large-scale trading activities of the Ovimbundu declined. Military occupation of Viye and Bailundu took place in 1890, and from that date European traders began to settle in Viye and Bailundu in ever-increasing numbers. In 1902 the Bailundu war occurred, after which the occupation of the whole of Umbundu country was quickly completed. This campaign paralysed trade, which was already suffering because of a great fall in rubber prices. Other factors which hastened the decline of Ovimbundu trading activities(2) include the famine in Ngangela country in 1911, the disappearance of illicit slave-traffic, and, finally, the building of the Benguella Railway (commenced in 1904), which put an end to the porterage and trading caravans of former days.(3)

LANGUAGE

"Umbundu is usually(4) associated with Ambo, Herero and kindred languages. It would however seem that more comparative study is required to show how real this apparent relationship is: it appears to be especially based on the fact that Umbundu uses prefixial o- with many of its noun classes. In general structure, however, Umbundu shows remarkable similarity in grammar and vocabulary to Luena, Luchazi and other languages of the Ganguella [Ngangela] group.

Features of Umbundu which are worthy of note are:-

i. Presence of nasal vowels before and after 'l', 'h', 'v' and 'w'.

ii. In certain nasal compounds, subtraction occurs, involving the second consonant, but not the nasal, e.g. *muntu* is realised as *omu*.

iii. Compared with the Lunda-Luena languages Umbundu exhibits an unusually large number of defective verbs.

iv. A vowel system of five vowels.

(1) These were at first one-way agreements, allowing Ovimbundu to trade in many lands, since it was to the advantage of the rulers of these countries. The Ovimbundu are said in fact to have discouraged the tribes to the east from venturing out on their own account. See Livingstone 1857, p.384, Cameron 1877, p.406.
(2) For much greater detail concerning the rise and fall of Ovimbundu trade see Childs op.cit., pp.191-215.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Doke 1945, p.101; Guthrie 1948, p.64; Childs 1949, p.8.

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and the European population greatly increased.[28] In some areas at this time a confused situation arose, in which 'robber barons', white and black, tyrannized over chiefs and villagers and engaged in the still vigorous slave trade, which now had acquired a few disguises on the coast.[29]

In 1911 the rubber trade ended, and about the same time slavery and the slave trade were effectively suppressed.[30] From this time onwards, too, civil administration began to be effective and the Benguela Railway became the most important link between the coast and the interior.[31] The trade disappeared, powers of the chiefs declined. The missions, both Catholic and Protestant, which had relatively little influence during the rubber trade period, gained more and more converts.[32]

2. *Ethnography*

Between the Ovimbundu and the sea lie the Hanya, the Nganda, and the Tjisanji tribes of whom little is known except that the Hanya and Nganda seem to be culturally related to the Ovimbundu.[33] To the south are the Nyaneka-Humbi group, cattle-keeping peoples who are culturally and linguistically related to the Ovimbundu, but who did not participate in the trade.[34] To the east lie the Ngangela[35], the Luimbi, and the

[28] Childs, pp. 210–11.

[29] For an account of Umbundu country at this time see H. W. Nevison, *A Modern Slavery*, New York, 1906. In Gumba I was told that Mutu-ya-Kevela the leader of the 1902–3 revolt had raided villages for slaves but that Samakaka whom Childs (p. 22) describes as a robber baron was spoken of favourably.

[30] Slavery had been legally suppressed from 1878. The slaves were called by other names but no effective change was made till 1910. See A. Bastos, *Monografia de Catumbella* in *Bol. Soc. Geog. Lisboa*, 1910 (pp. 74–81, 105–9, 141–55, 180–5, 225–8, 251–5, 279–5).

[31] Childs, p. 228.

[32] Ibid., pp. 220–23. Personal information.

[33] Ibid., p. 8.

[34] On these peoples see Estermann, *Etnografia do Sudoeste de Angola*, Vol. II.

[35] A tribe using this word as the root of the tribal name is to be found to the south-east of Umbundu country in the area round Vila Artur de Paiva. Padre A. Van Horrik, formerly of the Missão Católica de Cubango, tells me that the map contained in M. McCulloch, *The Southern Lunda and Related Peoples*, (London, 1951) should show the Ngangela as occupying much of the area actually assigned to the Mbwela and the south-eastern Ovimbundu. Mbwela does not seem to be the name any tribe uses for itself (Private information, Estermann and Van Horrik).

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THE OVIMBUNDU UNDER TWO SOVEREIGNTIES

M 496 463 Most of the employees of the Benguela Railway are Ovimbundu and many of the old pupils of the Catholic seminaries and of the Protestant secondary school[5] have found employment on it as clerks and telegraphists. The railway has also become a means of Umbundu migration carrying Ovimbundu to work in the coastal cities and plantations, and on the other side carrying their speech with it to the interior.

M [267] A 433 Angola is economically a land of primary production, and its cities and towns are founded on trade. There is little industry, although Lobito is noted for its cement works and saw mill, and drinks, both alcoholic and soft, paper and pottery are all manufactured in Angola.[6] On the coastal plain there are sugar plantations and there are a number of other plantations especially on the western fringe of the Highland, but the main crop of the Highland is maize, grown by the Ovimbundu and sold by the traders to the official boards which have store-houses on the railway line. The traders have generally tended to scatter themselves over the countryside though now the Government is insisting on new traders settling in recognized hamlets. The towns are small and frankly rather dismal places, serving as the administrative and postal centres for the neighbourhood, with a parish church, a school, two or three hotels, perhaps a club, and occasional cinema shows and a number of stores with a rather wider range of goods than those in the bush. They are significant from the point of view of communications, linking the traders in the bush to the cities and the railway.

A 438 A 361

A 49 A network of roads covers the Benguela Highland with the result that all villages are at most only a few miles from a track which is usable by motor vehicles. A truck seen on one of these roads will most likely belong to a trader, though it might belong to an official on one of his rare local trips, to a missionary, or to a labour recruiter. There are now a number of bus services in the Highland. As these serve only a certain number of roads, villagers who want to make a journey of any distance must walk or thumb a lift from a trader (who will charge) or a missionary (who will not charge) or ride on one of the still infrequent bicycles, his own, or a borrowed one.

[5] At Dondi, with Dr. Childs as headmaster.
[6] Egerton, op. cit., pp. 151–2. Galvão and Selvagem, op. cit., pp. 334–8.